

July/August 1996

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# Northern News

Northern Section, California Chapter, American Planning Association

# Cohousing: A Residential Alternative

by Kathryn McCamant

ith 20 developments now completed in North America (seven in Northern California) and more than 150 in the planning stages, cohousing communities are offering new models for reinvigorating inner city neighborhoods, maintaining open space in rural areas, and creating environmentally-sensitive, pedestrian-oriented developments in a wide variety of contexts. A California cohousing conference will be held in Sacramento October 11 - 13 to learn from these pioneering developments and look to what the future holds. A Friday lunch session is

being organized specifically for professionals interested in finding out more about this type of development.

Muir Commons
CoHousing Community

Housing Needs Have Changed

Cohousing communities are addressing dramatic demographic and economic changes that have taken place in our society leaving a mis-match between today's households and conventional housing. Suburban single-family house developments were designed for a 1950's model family with "a breadwinning father and a full-time housewife." Contemporary households—characterized by smaller families, women working outside the home,

and growing numbers of single parents, elderly, and singles living alone—face a child care crisis, social isolation, and a chronic time crunch, in part, because they are living in housing which no longer suits them.

At the same time, an increasingly mobile population has distanced many Americans from their extended families which have traditionally provided social and economic support. Most of us are feeling the effects of these trends in our own lives. Things that people once took for granted—family, community, a sense of belonging—must now be actively sought out. There is a lack of appropriate options.

### A New Type Of Housing

Cohousing responds to the basic needs of today's households—child care, social contact and economic efficiency—by combining the autonomy of private dwellings with the advantages of community living. The cohousing concept is reestablishing many of the advantages of traditional neighborhoods within the context of late twentieth-century life.

Each household has a private residence but also shares extensive common facilities with the larger group, such as a dining hall, children's playrooms, workshops, guest rooms and laundry facilities. Although individual dwellings are designed to be self-sufficient and each has its own kitchen, the common facilities, and particularly common dinners, are an important aspect of community life both for social and practical reasons. In many respects, the cohousing model is not new. Many of us remember places where people knew their neighbors and were familiar with each other's families over time.

(continued on page 4)

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### DIRECTORS COLUMN

by Wendy Cosin, AICP

This year's awards banquet, with an attendance of over 100, was one of the best we have ever had. The Section Awards Chair, Wayne Goldberg, organized the event at a new location — the Fort Mason Officers' Club — which offered both bay views and good food. Brad Inman presented his prognostications of the future of development and planning in the Bay Area. The awards banquet presented an opportunity to increase the visibility of planning, as well as to celebrate outstanding planning projects from the past year and to meet with old and new professional associates.

Successful public involvement was one of the factors that made several of the projects award winners. Availability of information was key. Newsprint publication of the Santa Clara County General Plan and attractive posters of the Dixon Downtown Revitalization Plan and the Santa Clara Trails Master Plan were used to capture interest in the projects. Outstanding community efforts were cited in many of the successful applications. Among them, it was noted that Oakland listened to the public and translated their desires in the Open Space and Parks Element.

The City of Cotati is one of those lucky jurisdictions with planning-oriented elected officials. The distinguished leadership award for an elected official was presented to Sandy Elles, Cotati's Vice Mayor, who spoke about the importance of being regionable. Ways to encourage Council members and Planning Commissioners to increase their knowledge and support for planning include signing them up as APA members and/or taking them to planning events. The Awards Banquet is one of the best opportunities to show local officials the broader view of what is happening in planning in the Bay Area.

1996 is half over....this is a good time to start thinking about projects that you might want to submit for an award next year. The deadline for nominations is April 15, 1997.

Here are a couple summer reading tips courtesy of David Fey of the Central Section. Silent Travelers addresses historical issues with immigration and public health, making connections between basic planning principles and how they have directly affected people's lives. A lighter touch about a murder investigation and political corruption in the City of Fresno — In My Father's Name — was also recommended.

Editor's Note: The Northern News editorial staff has expanded to include editorial assistant John Cook. He can be reached at (510) 540-0655.

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### BULLETIN BOARD

### **Urban Streams Conference**

The City of Arcata will be holding an Urban Streams Conference in mid-November. The Conference will be geared toward local government, planners, developers, engineers, educators, and stream enthusiasts. Currently there is a call for papers, and if you are interested in submitting, abstracts or poster summaries are due July 15th. For more information please call the City of Arcata at (707) 822-8184.

### From the Far North

by Lia Sullivan

Eureka is now cruising in the fast lane of the telecommunication superhighway thanks to the new electronic conference room recently inaugurated by the Redwood Region Economic Development Council (RREDC). The facility, which seats 35, is available for rent for satellite training programs and other cyber-gatherings for the cost of room rent, satellite access, and downlink fees.

The facility's first usage was for the June 19th satellite broadcast presentation of "Livable Neighborhoods: Rethinking Residential Streets," a program of the American Public Works Association, and sponsored by the City of Arcata and the RREDC. The half-day program was led by a panel composed of a traffic engineer, a mayor, a crime prevention specialist, and a municipal public works department director. The panel dealt with questions (phoned and faxed in from 100 downlink sites) regarding the planning, implementation, and evaluation of traffic calming measures, and presented three different case studies of completed projects. The presentation was attended by a capacity crowd of local engineers, public and private planners, and public works staff.

Those interested in using the Eureka electronic conference facility should contact Judith McGinty of RREDC at (707) 445-9651.

The Bulletin Board section of the Northern News is intended to provide a forum for individuals to provide the membership with information about events or current topics. If you would like to submit an item for the Bulletin Board section, contact the Newsletter Editor at (510) 227-4362.

# Casebook Solicits Authors

If you have a compelling planning story to tell, the AICP Casebook has an offer for you. Casebook, the newest publication of the American Institute of Certified Planners, is seeking authors for upcoming issues. Issued quarterly, Casebook chronicles the lessons learned from innovative, controversial, or challenging planning programs in a format geared to the practicing professional. Each case study examines the processes, actors, and strategies involved in planning implementation. Authors of published case studies will receive a \$500 stipend; a 100 word abstract may be submitted to the editor for evaluation. If you wish to submit or would like more information, contact:

Allan A. Hodges, AICP Casebook Editor 23 Pinckney Street #3 Boston, MA 02114 Tel: (617)342-4527

# Meet Amsterdam's Planning Director

On Monday, July 29, there will be a no-host reception for Wim Hartman, the Director of Planning for the City of Amsterdam, and Cilian Terwindt, Head of Amsterdam's Planning Research Section, at the Jupiter, 2181 Shattuck Avenue, in Berkeley. We will meet at the outdoor patio from 5:30 - 7:30. Please join us - look for the Dutch flag!



Cohousing communities offer a contemporary model for recreating neighborhoods with that sense of place, and the security and sense of belonging which accompanies it. Specifically, cohousing offers a balance of both privacy and community, a safe and supportive environment for children and elders, a practical and spontaneous lifestyle, intergenerational neighborhoods and environmentally-sensitive design emphasizing pedestrian access and open space. Some common characteristics of cohousing communities are:

Participatory Process: Residents participate in the planning and design of the development so that it directly responds to their needs.

Neighborhood Design: The physical design encourages a sense of community.

Extensive Common Facilities: The common house is designed for daily use, to supplement private living areas.

Common facilities often extend beyond the common house to include children play areas, vegetable gardens, and the like

### Complete Resident Management:

Residents take complete responsibility for the on-going management, organizing cooperatively to meet their changing needs.

Cohousing communities also provide societal benefits such as greater resource efficiency in terms of both materials and energy, and enhanced security for the community and surrounding neighborhood. Furthermore, by taking advantage of the benefits of clustering dwellings, this type of development makes higher densities more attractive, an essential element in reducing transportation requirements and suburban sprawl. The scale of cohousing communities—15 to 30 dwellings—make them ideal for urban infill sites or conversions of exist-

ing buildings. The Southside Park Community in Sacramento and the Emeryville community have drawn professional households of all ages including families with children into urban neighborhoods that are suffering from neglect. In Europe, cohousing has been used as the building block for larger developments by placing multiple communities adjacent to each other and intermixed with commercial and retail.

The cohousing model incorporates ideas which have already proven very successful. Planned retirement communities often include shared dining and other common facilities. Resident involvement is recognized as a critical aspect in reducing long-term housing management costs. Yet, cohousing communities are unique in combining a participatory planning process, neighborhood design, shared facilities, and resident management to attract all ages and household types. As a result, cohousing communities become cross-generational neighborhoods which support traditional values of family and community.

Introduced in the United States (from Denmark) with the publication of our book *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves* in 1988, this type of housing continues to attracting growing interest.

Kathryn McCamant is co-author of Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves (Ten Speed Press, 1988, 1994) and a founding principal at the CoHousing Company, an architecture and development consulting firm that has worked on the design and development of dozens of cohousing communities throughout North America. She lives with her husband and 5 year old daughter in the Emeryville CoHousing community. To find out more information about cohousing and the October Conference, contact The CoHousing Company at (510)549-9980.



#### JOBS

#### Airport Facilities Planning Manager

San Francisco Airports Commission Salary: to \$82,711

The San Francisco Airports Commission seeks a planning manager to conduct studies and develop plans in support of airport development and to update and monitor implementation of a \$2.4 billion master plan. The position requires at least 8 years of airport facilities planning, development, or consulting, as well as a BS in a related field; registered engineers or architects especially encouraged to apply. Send resumes to Job 1374, Planning, San Francisco Airpor/ Commission, P.O. Box 8097, San Francisco, CA 94128. Application deadline is July 20, 1996, although this may be extended.

### Next NSCCAPA Board Meeting

There will be a Section Board meeting on Thursday, July 25 at the Oakland Planning Department. Board meetings are a good opportunity to start getting more involved in Section activities. We have pizza, too (for a very nominal fee). Call any Board member to for more information.



### South Bay RAC Brown Bag Luncheon

The South Bay RAC will be holding its first Brown Bag Luncheon on July 24, 1996 at the Youth Science Institute in Saratoga. The topic of this meeting is the City of Saratoga's Measure G, adopted by the voters last March. Its purpose is to control the City's growth by freezing the existing General Plan land use map for 30 years. Any amendments to the existing map will require approval by the voters. Paul Curtis, Saratoga Community Development Director, will discuss Measure G and its impacts on staff, land use decisions and the development review process. Come join us to share your thoughts on this topic, and meet your fellow South Bay planners.

When: Wednesday, July 24, at 12:00 to 1:30 p.m.

Where: Youth Science Institute, 16055 Sanborn Rd., Saratoga (In Sanborn Park)

Cost: None; bring your own

lunch.

RSVP: Heather Bradley, City of Saratoga (408)867-3438 ext. 230

### **UC Davis Courses**

The University of California at Davis, University Extension Program is offering the following courses in July, at the UC Davis Campus. For course information call toll free (800) 752-0881.

Legal and Ethical Obligations in Land Use Planning, July 22.

Developing Land-Use Plans: The Collaborative Process, July 23.

Public/Private Partnerships in Real Estate Development, July 24.

Negotiating Development Agreements, July 25.

Dispute Resolution: Negotiating Land Use Conflicts, July 26.

### COMMENTARY

## Cohousing in Emeryville

By Maryann Leshin

n Emeryville, which is one square mile and a conglomeration of aging industrial sites, successful commercial and office activity, single family neighborhoods with tree lined streets, and isolated condominium projects, almost any development can be called infill. Additionally, as a result of the City's significant industrial base which is in transition, much of the rehab activity is adaptive reuse. The Doyle Street Co-Housing Project, however, is one of the finest examples you'll find of both. A small infill site was maximized to provide much needed housing and to revitalize a neighborhood, and it creatively adapted and reused a light industrial building, adding to it and having it blend in seamlessly with the streetscape.

The development also offers an example of the difficult issues which both the developer and the community face with such proposals: meeting parking requirements, providing open space, creating higher density and neighborhood acceptance of changes to the status quo.

The Doyle Street Co-Housing Project faced each and every one of these difficulties. The project proponents persevered, and eventually won approval of the Planning Commission and the City Council. Concerns with parking and traffic were paramount, and the developers worked diligently to address these concerns. Some of the ways in which they did this was to sacrifice open space, to craft creative parking schemes, and to meet with members of the community to explain the dynamics of their project and the benefits it would bring to the neighborhood. While not all the issues were resolved to everyone's satisfaction, there was consensus that the development should go forward.

The City of Emeryville now boasts an attractive and well constructed residential project which is as much a part of Doyle Street as the neighboring homes and businesses which preceded it. The development also stands as a unique form of housing for new residents of the City. Emeryville has a long standing commitment to housing development, and while this project is not officially an "affordable" project, it was clear to the City's Housing Committee, that this would be an important addition to the housing stock. Emeryville has a tradition of providing for a variety of housing needs, and the cohousing concept fits right into the mix.

Since the cohousing project first hit the scene, the City's Redevelopment Agency has engaged itself in a variety of infill affordable housing developments, including below market rate condominiums, senior rental housing, family rental housing and housing for people with AIDS. Each has presented its own challenges, but each represents a positive addition to the Emeryville community.

Maryann Leshin is a Projects Coordinator for the City of Emeryville Redevelopment Agency.

The Commentary section of the newsletter is intended to provide a forum for members to express their views relative to planning related topics, or to express an opinion relative to articles printed in this newsletter. If you would like to submit an article, contact the Newsletter Editor at (510) 227-4362.

### REARVIEW

by Steve Matarazzo

"I refuse to join an organization that would accept me as a member."

-Marx (Groucho, that is)

am in my twenty-third year of being a professional planner in California. In that time, I have worked for six different jurisdictions, and have had a short stint as a private planning consultant. Suffice it to say that I am more than familiar with the employee recruitment process. For those of you currently on the job market, my comments below may ring particularly true.

As most of us know, California's public sector utilizes basically three types of employment procedures. First is the straightforward process where you simply apply for the job from a listing, receive confirmation that your application has been accepted for processing, and then shortly thereafter, receive notification of an interview date, or, more commonly, a rejection. The other two processes are similar up to the point where you send in your application: while some jurisdictions will string out the process over many months (especially true for department head recruitment) and thereby acknowledge receipt of your application months after your first contact, other, less responsive jurisdictions never acknowledge your application at all, forcing you to make an uncomfortable phone call to find out if your resume slipped into an administrative black hole.

I have become so familiar with the process that I now act like a professional blackjack player who needs only glance at the upper tips of his cards to know where he stands. For example, if I open a letter from the Happy Valley, California, personnel department and it starts with either "Congratulations! You are . . ." or "You are invited . . ." or "We are pleased . . .", then I know my resume has proven worthy of further consideration in the form of a personal interview (or, more and more these days, an assessment center invitation). If, however, I receive a letter from a personnel department, I know I need read no further if it starts with "Thank you for your interest . . ." or "We received many qualified resumes . . ." or "The recent recruitment effort for planning director drew a tremendous response . . ." and so on.

Just once, I wish the personnel department would be more direct. How about something like "Don't even think about working for this city until you have received the requisite training and experience!?"



Steve is the Community Development Director for Sand City, which is way down by Monterey.



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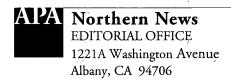


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23	UCD Extension: Developing Land Use Plans			7	8	9	10	11	12	13
24	South Bay RAC Brown Bag Luncheon		•	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
24	UCD Extension: Public/Private Partnerships	;		21 28	22)	30	31	(25)	(26)	27
25	UCD Extension: Development Agreements		-		-,		_			
26	UCD Extension: Dispute Resolution									
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